

Section III. Human Uses and Trends

Section Overview

The many ways we use and enjoy Pleasant Bay's resources have, to a degree, been influenced by the habits, customs and traditions of the region's first inhabitants. The continuum of human activities in and around the Bay continues to shape the condition of natural resources described in Section II. As the number and intensity of human activities increase, their influence on the Bay's resources becomes more apparent. Growing use of the Bay for a variety of land- and water-based activities threaten both the harmony of activity and the health of the Bay's natural resources.

Most traditional uses of the Bay, both recreational and commercial, continue today. Beach walking, swimming and beach access are by far the most popular uses of the Bay according to the results of the residents' survey. Sailing and power boating, followed by shellfishing and fishing, are the next most popular uses. The uses considered most important by residents surveyed are scenic viewing, walking along the shore, bird watching, nature viewing, and beach activities. Growth in recreational uses has outpaced commercial uses of the Bay. Only six percent of residents surveyed said they use the Bay for commercial purposes. Of those, half engage in shellfishing.

This profile of uses suggests that most people use and value Pleasant Bay for the quality and accessibility of its scenic and natural resources. However, many of the ways we use the Bay pose threats to the health of natural resources, and serve to diminish the public's access to these resources:

- *Chapter 5. Cultural and Visual Resources.* The Bay's history, scenic quality and sense of tranquillity are central to how we enjoy its resources. Yet these attributes are rarely recognized for their ecological and cultural significance. Scenic views, a primary source of public access and enjoyment of the Bay, are shrouded by shoreline development, and over-grown vegetation. Increased noise levels on the Bay rank high among community concerns, and threaten wildlife habitats. Physical and cultural reminders of the region's rich history, which may foretell its future, are ignored to the point of nearly being forgotten.
- *Chapter 6. Land and Shoreline Use and Development.* Regulations governing land use within the Bay's watershed allow increased residential development, with little provision for the long-term protection of open space. As discussed in Chapter 2, nutrient loading from septic systems poses a threat to the Bay's water quality. At the shoreline, a licensing moratorium has halted the growth of structures for boating, water access, and erosion control. However, there is pent up demand for these structures that, if not managed, could impose significant stresses on natural resources.
- *Chapter 7. Boating.* Sailing and power boating are among the most readily identifiable Bay activities. Boating activity is on the rise, leading to congestion on the

waterways during the peak season. More boating activity , coupled with increased demand for boating access and facilities, increases threats to the Bay’s natural resources.

- *Chapter 8. Shellfishing and Finfishing.* Shellfishing and finfishing are popular and traditional uses of the Bay. Management of shellfish and finfish resources has heretofore focused on controlling access through permits. Continued interest in shellfishing and finfishing, coupled with declining harvests of several species, is prompting managers to explore regional strategies for long-term sustainability of these resources.

The future management of the Bay must be based on a clear understanding of how the ways we use the Bay influence natural resource conditions. The following chapters explore trends in human uses and activities and, together with the information contained in Section II, provide a foundation for discussing the resource management issues and recommendations found in Section IV.